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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-seventh year

Identical letters dated 15 February 2012 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am compelled to draw your attention to the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, the result of Israel's continuing aggression and illegal policies perpetrated against the Palestinian people and their land. The situation has continued to deteriorate and tensions are exponentially rising as Israel, the occupying Power, continues to gravely violate the fourth Geneva Convention and United Nations resolutions, particularly through its brazen pursuit of its illegal settlement colonization campaign in defiance of the law, the principles and the objectives of the peace process and the global demands for a complete cessation of this illegal, destructive practice.

The expansion of existing settlements, the construction of new settlements, the construction of the Wall, the confiscation of land, the demolition of homes, the construction of Israeli-only roads, the hundreds of checkpoints and roadblocks, the displacement of Palestinians and permission of the vile aggression of settlers against Palestinian civilians and properties have not stopped for a single day. As was recently reaffirmed by various international bodies and organizations, Israel's illegal settlement activities and home demolitions in particular have continued, intensified and surpassed such illegal actions of all past years by the occupying Power, reconfirming that Israel is frantically attempting to impose as many illegal facts on the ground as possible to alter in its favour the demographic composition, the character and the status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in and around East Jerusalem and throughout the Jordan Valley.

We must draw attention to the recent report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Raquel Rolnik, who addressed this fact directly, revealing that "the Israeli authorities promote a territorial development model that excludes, discriminates against and displaces minorities, particularly affecting Palestinian communities". She further stressed that Bedouin communities in "Area C" of the West Bank and Palestinian neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem are

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the "new frontiers of dispossession of the traditional inhabitants, and the implementation of a strategy of Judaization and control of the territory".

We reiterate that these illegal actions are fragmenting Palestinian land and society and gravely impairing the viability of the two-State solution, that they must continue to be condemned by the international community, and that any changes effected must continue to be rejected by the international community. Israel, the occupying Power, must not be permitted to forcibly seize more Palestinian land and must be held accountable to its legal obligations and cease all illegal actions in the Territory, which it has belligerently and illegitimately occupied since 1967. The international community must be unwavering in this demand, as it continues to exert efforts to revive peace negotiations, including through the creation of an appropriate environment for the conduct of credible, good faith negotiations in which international law and resolutions are respected. The alternative — allowing Israel to continue its illegal schemes, which daily negate the two-State solution, deepen the conflict, further destabilize the region and cause great suffering to the Palestinian people — is unacceptable and unsustainable.

In this regard, I wish to draw your attention to the following illegal actions perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to reiterate the appeal of the Palestinian people and their leadership to the international community, including the Security Council, to uphold its legal obligations and responsibilities and to act forthwith to bring an end to this unlawful and dangerous situation and to salvage the prospects of realizing a just, comprehensive and lasting peace settlement by which, inter alia, the Palestinian people will realize their right to self-determination and freedom in their independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

Israeli settlement activities

- The occupying Power began work on 11 January on a so-called national park on lands belonging to the Palestinian villages of Al-Isawiyah and Al-Tur, adjacent to the City of East Jerusalem, further harming the access of the villagers to their agricultural lands, their livelihoods and ability to develop.

- On 29 January, it was reported that Israel is moving ahead with the expansion of the illegal "Karmel" settlement on 10 dunums of confiscated Palestinian land belonging to a family from the Um al-Kher village, located south of Al-Khalil (Hebron).

- On 30 January it was revealed that the Israeli Government had adopted a new decision to offer financial incentives to encourage more Israelis to transfer to the illegal settlements in the West Bank, with approximately 70 of those settlements listed as so-called national priority areas for the Government housing and development grants. This is not the first time that the occupying Power has duplicitously tried to advance such "legislation" aimed at consolidating its illegal network of settlements and de facto annexation of the Palestinian land on which they have been built.

- On 5 February, Israeli occupying forces uprooted olive trees in the Kafr Qaddum village, east of Qalqilya, and began digging up land to expand the nearby illegal settlement of "Kedumim".

- This week, claims by Israel regarding the removal of so-called settlement outposts were revealed to be farcical, as it was reported that settlers from the illegal outpost of "Migron" had struck a deal with the Government to relocate to yet another area deep within the West Bank.

- Yesterday, 14 February, it was revealed that the Israeli Government has given permission to an extremist pro-settler Jewish group to build an "archaeological centre" in the middle of the Silwan neighbourhood in Occupied East Jerusalem, further escalating tensions in this sensitive area.

- In this connection, it must be stressed that Occupied East Jerusalem continues to suffer extensively from the extremism and the provocations of the occupying Power and its settlers, as well as the constant threats and incitement by right-wing Israeli Government officials, who continue to make provocative and reckless declarations and claims regarding holy sites in the occupied city, particularly with regard to Al-Haram Al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) in the Old City.

Israeli settler violence

Extremist illegal settlers continue to perpetrate violence, terror and cruelty against the Palestinian people throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, committing depraved acts of lawlessness witnessed by and under the protection of the Israeli occupying forces. This has included, among other crimes, the following:

- On 11 January, settlers vandalized yet another mosque in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, attacking a mosque in the village of Salfit. Settlers have also repeatedly engaged in the torching of vehicles belonging to Palestinians as part of their so-called price tag or revenge actions.

- On 30 January, a settler seized Palestinian land in Nazlat Zeid village near Jenin by enclosing the land with a fence. At least 120 dunums of the village's land has been seized and cut off by Israel's annexation Wall.

- On 1 February, settlers stoned Palestinians in a car passing near a settlement south of Nablus, injuring a 60-year-old woman, who suffered a head wound and was hospitalized.

- On 3 February, a 20-year-old Palestinian shepherd, Mahdi Daraghma, was beaten and injured by Israeli settlers who attacked him in the northern Jordan Valley, where he was tending his sheep.

- On 5 February, armed settlers on motorcycles raided the village of Nabi Saleh after midnight in an attempt to terrorize the villagers and vandalize property, but they were repelled by the families who came out to protect their village.

- On 7 February, Israeli settlers vandalized a school in the Beit Safafa neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, spraying racist and violent slogans such as "Death to Arabs" on the school walls and "Death to Christians" on the walls of an eleventh century Greek Orthodox monastery in the City.

- On 6 and 7 February, settlers uprooted trees in the village of Qaryut and more than 25 olive trees recently planted in Beit Ummar.

- Today, Israeli settlers, backed by a large contingent of occupying forces, rampaged through the village of Turmus Ayya, north of Ramallah, attacking civilians and uprooting olive trees.

Home demolitions and confiscation of property

- As reported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in 2011, Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes increased dramatically, forcibly displacing almost 1,100 people, many of them Palestinian inhabitants of East Jerusalem and members of the Palestinian Bedouin community, over half of them children, and compromising the livelihoods of several thousand more people. Forced displacement by Israel, the occupying Power, of the Palestinian civilian population constitutes yet another egregious violation of its obligations under the fourth Geneva Convention, by which it is bound.

- On 25 January, Israeli occupying forces handed out 17 demolition orders in the Palestinian village of Al-Aqaba, informing of the occupying Power's intention to destroy homes, cattle sheds and other infrastructure in the village.

- On 29 January, Israeli occupying forces raided the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan and closed down the Silwan Charitable Society, a kindergarten and the Islamic Silwan Club. Such actions are a reminder of the continued forced closure by Israel of official Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem as it attempts to erase the Palestinian presence and disable Palestinian society in the City.

- On 30 January, Israeli occupying forces demolished a residential caravan in the Beit Hanina neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, causing 13 Palestinians to become homeless.

- On 1 February, Israeli occupying forces informed several Palestinian farmers in the Nahalin village, south of Bethlehem, of plans to confiscate 430 dunums of their land.

- Also on 1 February, Israeli occupying forces handed demolitions orders to several families in the Ayyoub and Al-Bustan areas of Silwan under the pretext of "building without a permit".

- On 7 February, Israeli occupying forces issued eviction orders to Palestinian farmers in Beit Ula village near Al-Khalil, demanding that they evacuate 10,000 square metres of their land.

- Just two days ago, on 13 February, Israeli occupying forces demolished 22 buildings in the village of Khirbet al-Rahwa near Al-Khalil, displacing 120 Palestinian civilians. Twenty Israeli military vehicles accompanied by bulldozers raided the village and razed 16 family shelters, 6 animal shelters and a well that was the only water source of the village.

Military raids and killing and injury of civilians

- Israeli military raids continue to be carried out against the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, causing the death and injury of Palestinian civilians and the destruction of property, and spreading fear and trauma among the population.

- On 3 February, the occupying Power launched several air strikes from warplanes against areas in the Gaza Strip, seriously injuring a young man and a child in Beit Lahiya in the north.

- On 12 February, Israeli warplanes struck Gaza again, killing a 69-year-old man, Abdul Karim al-Zaytouna, and injuring three others and destroying an animal farm. Israeli military assaults on the Gaza Strip by warplanes and naval warships continue to terrorize the Palestinian population in Gaza, who also continue to suffer vastly from the collective punishment being inflicted on them by Israel's illegal blockade, which continues to be imposed in grave breach of international humanitarian law and continues to have a disastrous impact on the humanitarian and socio-economic situation in the Occupied Gaza Strip.

- Israeli occupying forces also continue to use excessive force and violence against peaceful demonstrators, including Palestinian, Israeli and international activists protesting the occupying Power's illegal colonization policies. Such Israeli aggression regrettably resulted in the wounding of a French national, who was hit by a gas grenade while she was in a demonstration in the village of Nabi Saleh, where 12 other people were also injured as they protested against Israel's continuing land confiscation in the village.

Arrests, detentions and conditions of Palestinian political prisoners

- Arrests are being carried out daily by the Israeli occupying forces, who continue to violently raid Palestinian homes, villages, towns and cities across the West Bank to arrest and detain Palestinian civilians, with at least 12 Palestinians arrested yesterday. Recent arrests have even included the rearrest of Palestinians released in the prisoner exchange between the two sides.

- We must draw your attention to the continuing plight of a Palestinian, Khader Adnan, 33 years old, who was seized from his home in the village of Arrabeh near Jenin on 17 December 2011 and continues to be arbitrarily detained by Israel. He is now in the fifty-ninth day of a hunger strike in protest of the occupying Power's policy of arbitrary detention and ill treatment of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees it continues to hold and abuse in its jails. Adnan's health is gravely deteriorating as the occupying Power continues his detention without charge.

- We call again for international attention and urgent action with regard to Israel's illegal practice of imprisoning and detaining Palestinians, including children, women and elected officials. The conditions of these prisoners, the majority of whom are inhumanely and brutally mistreated by the occupying Power, must be examined by international humanitarian monitors and their legal status and continued imprisonment must be addressed by the international community in accordance with international humanitarian law.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 416 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 6 January 2012 (A/ES-10/544-S/2012/11) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the

Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations